

STATE SENATOR • JIM BARCIA • 31ST DISTRICT

Barcia Press Release

P.O. Box 30036 • Lansing • Michigan • 48909-7536 • 517-373-1777 • Fax: 517-373-5871
E-mail: senjbarcia@senate.michigan.gov • www.senate.michigan.gov/dem/SD31



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CONTACT: Sen. Jim Barcia
517/373-1777

SEN. BARCIA SUPPORTS DOMESTIC SUGAR INDUSTRY *Denounces free trade agreements as serious threat.*

LANSING - Sen. Jim Barcia (D-Bay City) expressed strong support for Michigan sugar beet growers while assailing free trade negotiations such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) which could threaten the viability of Michigan's sugar industry. His remarks were part of his address today to the state Agriculture Commission in Lansing (attached).

"We need to ensure that our voices are heard – and we need to educate people on the negative impact that increased levels of sugar imports will have on our domestic sugar industry," Barcia said.

His remarks came in response to the recent Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) negotiated with El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua which would allow these countries to export an additional 90,000 metric tons of sugar into the U.S., with a two percent increase each year for the next 15 years. Congress is expected to vote on the measure this spring.

"We're not asking for special treatment for the sugar industry," Barcia said. "We're simply asking for a level playing field in order for the Michigan and U.S. sugar industry to remain competitive."

Barcia's comments followed last week's letter from Gov. Jennifer Granholm to President Bush which said, in part: "There is grave concern that the trade negotiations will destroy an

industry that is facing unfair competition from subsidized producers from countries with minimal labor and environmental standards.”

Sen. Barcia introduced a Michigan Senate Resolution last fall urging U.S. trade negotiators to support the U.S. sugar industry and to seriously consider the adverse effects of such agreements on Michigan’s sugar industry, an industry that contributes \$500 million a year to the state economy and employs 5,000 Michigan workers.